

Please accept the following as my testimony in OPPOSITION to S.B. 477, An Act Concerning The Public Health of Residents Of This State:

Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am writing today to express my OPPOSITION to S.B. 477, An Act Concerning Public Health of Residents of this State. Specifically, I OPPOSE the entirety of Section 7 of the proposed bill, for the following reasons:

1. The fundamental premise of the section, that there is a problem in this state with "gun violence," is wrong and misguided. "Gun violence" is violence committed with a gun, but firearms are not the only implements used to commit violence. Is there a problem with VIOLENCE in Connecticut today? Assuredly yes. We live in an age when youths don't hesitate to beat down and "curb stomp" anyone who doesn't show them the proper respect. People attack staff at McDonald's if an order is wrong, or just if the food is perceived to be too cold. Assaults with fists, feet, knives, clubs and, yes, guns are all too commonplace. But the problem is not the guns, the problem is the attitude that violence -- with any implement -- has become the first response for many people to any perceived insult or slight, no matter how slight. A commission that is focused on "gun" violence is going to direct all of its attention to guns rather than to the underlying atmosphere of violence as a first, rather than last, resort and will therefore not make any difference in addressing the real problem.

2. The proposed membership of the commission is completely one-sided, thereby ensuring that any recommendations coming out of the commission and any grants made by the commission will be biased and one-sided. For example, the Connecticut Violence Intervention Program is explicitly an anti-gun activist organization. Their focus is more on guns than on the violent attitudes that lead to young people using guns **AND OTHER DANGEROUS WEAPONS** to commit violent acts. Further, this organization deceptively attempts to classify "gun" violence as a disease, which it is not. There are no vaccinations, medications, or surgical procedures that can prevent violence. "Gun" violence is not a medical/epidemiological issue; it is a sociological issue.

Likewise, CT Against Gun Violence is explicitly an anti-gun activist organization. Others of the organizations proposed to have representation on the commission may also be (and probably are) anti-gun organizations. Yet our State constitution guarantees our citizens "a right to bear arms in defense of himself and the state." (Article First, Section 15) The membership of the proposed commission does not include any representation from organizations dedicated to safe and responsible use of firearms, such as the Connecticut Sportsmans Alliance, the Connecticut Citizens Defense League, and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (which is headquartered in Connecticut).

By intentionally forming a commission comprised predominately of anti-gun activists while excluding the people best qualified to address the positive aspects of firearms use and ownership, this proposed commission cannot possibly achieve a fair and balanced report or program. Any product of the commission as proposed will be nothing but a biased, one-sided, hatchet job. Connecticut already has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. If all our anti-gun laws haven't been effective in preventing "gun" violence, I respectfully submit that it's time to recognize that a different approach is needed, not the enactment of more laws that criminals aren't going to pay any attention to anyway, or throwing more money at organizations and programs that are not achieving effective results.

3. By making this commission a standing commission, with a full-time executive director and a full-time

staff, this proposed bill will effectively institutionalize and exacerbate the problem by funding on a continuing basis a biased, one-sided approach that ignores the underlying root cause of the problem -- violent attitudes -- while pursuing legislative and regulatory initiatives that will accomplish nothing other than to further burden law-abiding owners of firearms, law-abiding sportsmen, and citizens who rely on firearms for their own self-defense.

In closing, I respectfully request that Section 7 be stricken from the proposed bill, because it is a discriminatory proposal that is guaranteed to fail in producing any meaningful result.

Respectfully submitted,

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